

E1-1539

vjr

Heather Hyde  
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Pierre, S. Dak. 57501

June 5, 2005

Case Control Unit  
Finance Docket No. 33407  
Surface Transportation Brd.  
1925 K Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Attn: Victoria Rutson  
Section of Environmental Analysis



Dear Ms. Rutson:

The purpose of this letter is to comment on the SEIS for D M & E's proposed project. My comments are not directly on the topics for which they were solicited, but I cannot in good conscience let this opportunity to make a comment pass.

I have read the opinion written by the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals and the SEIS for the D M & E's application. I am discouraged that there has been little or no consideration of local economic or aesthetic issues regarding Pierre, South Dakota..

Pierre is a pretty town situated on the banks of the Missouri River. It is the state capitol. The old one-track railroad bridge crossing the river is picturesque. There are no passenger trains any more, and the freight trains haven't been a problem. That's about to change.

The railroad lines through Pierre separate the north and south sides of town, areas that have been known for generations as "the hill" (north, residential) and "the flat" (south, downtown, close to the river.) Recent economic developments, especially the location of a Super Walmart on the east edge of town, have decimated the home-grown businesses in downtown.

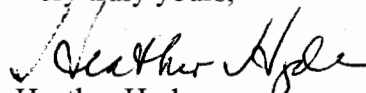
There are four railroad crossings in Pierre. The proposed mitigations do not include grade changes at two of those crossings. People who might patronize the local businesses will be discouraged from going downtown via a direct route by the prospect of having to wait at a train crossing for a long coal train. There will be as many as 37 trains every day! Those shoppers will take their business to the big-box stores east of town. The crossing delays will seal the fate of downtown businesses.

Those of us who can foresee these consequences fervently hope that D M & E will at least make grade change mitigations at the two unimproved crossings.

We love Pierre and would hate to see, in addition to the obvious aesthetic consequences, its economy permanently damaged.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Very truly yours,

  
Heather Hyde.